

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 72—EXPRESSING CONDEMNATION OF THE USE OF CHILDREN AS SOLDIERS AND THE BELIEF THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD SUPPORT AND, WHERE POSSIBLE, LEAD EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH AND ENFORCE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS DESIGNED TO END THIS ABUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. WELLSTONE submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. CON. RES. 72

Whereas in 1999 approximately 300,000 individuals under the age of 18 are participating in armed conflict in more than 30 countries worldwide and hundreds of thousands more are at risk of being conscripted at any given moment;

Whereas many of these children are forcibly conscripted through kidnapping or coercion, while others join military units due to economic necessity, to avenge the loss of a family member, or for their own personal safety;

Whereas many military commanders frequently force child soldiers to commit gruesome acts of ritual killings or torture against their enemies, including against other children;

Whereas many military commanders separate children from their families in order to foster dependence on military units and leaders, leaving children vulnerable to manipulation, deep traumatization, and in need of psychological counseling and rehabilitation;

Whereas child soldiers are exposed to hazardous conditions and risk physical injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, malnutrition, deformed backs and shoulders from carrying overweight loads, and respiratory and skin infections;

Whereas many young female soldiers face the additional psychological and physical horrors of rape and sexual abuse, being enslaved for sexual purposes by militia commanders, and forced to endure severe social stigma should they return home;

Whereas children in northern Uganda continue to be kidnapped by the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) which is supported and funded by the Government of Sudan and which has committed and continues to commit gross human rights violations in Uganda;

Whereas children in Sri Lanka have been forcibly recruited by the opposition Tamil Tigers movement and forced to kill or be killed in the armed conflict in that country;

Whereas an estimated 7,000 child soldiers have been involved in the conflict in Sierra Leone, some as young as age 10, with many being forced to commit extrajudicial executions, torture, rape, and amputations for the rebel Revolutionary United Front;

Whereas the international community is developing a consensus on how to most effectively address the problem, and toward this end, the United Nations has established a working group to negotiate an optional international agreement on child soldiers which would raise the legal age of recruitment and participation in armed conflict to age 18;

Whereas on October 29, 1998, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan set minimum age requirements for United Nations peacekeeping personnel that are made available by member nations of the United Nations;

Whereas United Nations Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping, Bernard Miyet,

announced in the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly that contributing governments of member nations were asked not to send civilian police and military observers under the age of 25, and that troops in national contingents should preferably be at least 21 years of age but in no case should they be younger than 18 years of age;

Whereas on August 25, 1999, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1261 (1999) condemning the use of children in armed conflicts;

Whereas in addressing the Security Council, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu, urged the adoption of a global three-pronged approach to combat the use of children in armed conflict: first, to raise the age limit for recruitment and participation in armed conflict from the present age of 15 to the age of 18; second, to increase international pressure on armed groups which currently abuse children; and third, to address the political, social, and economic factors which create an environment where children are induced by appeal of ideology or by socio-economic collapse to become child soldiers; and

Whereas the United States delegation to the United Nations working group relating to child soldiers has opposed efforts to raise the minimum age of participation in armed conflict to the age of 18 despite the support of an overwhelming majority of countries: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That—

(1) the Congress joins the international community in condemning the use of children as soldiers by governmental and non-governmental armed forces worldwide; and

(2) it is the sense of the Congress that—
(A) the United States should not oppose current efforts to negotiate an optional international agreement to raise the international minimum age for military service to the age of 18;

(B) the Secretary of State should address positively and expediently this issue in the next session of the United Nations working group relating to child soldiers before this process is abandoned by the international community; and

(C) the President and the Congress should work together to enact a law that establishes a fund for the rehabilitation and reintegration into society of child soldiers.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, today I am submitting a concurrent resolution expressing condemnation of the use of children as soldiers and the belief that the United States should support and, where possible, lead efforts to establish and enforce international standards designed to end this abuse of human rights.

In 1999, an estimated 300,000 individuals under the age of 18, some as young as age 5, were serving as soldiers in dozens of armed conflicts around the world, some with armed insurgencies, and some in regular armies.

Over the past five years, children were combatants in at least 33 countries around the world: in Africa, in the Americas, in Europe, the Middle East and Persian Gulf, and in Asia.

Throughout the world, children are exploited by adults for cruel purposes. These children have no voice. Some children are kidnaped and forced to become combatants. In the conflict in Sierra Leone, rebel armies willfully conscripted children into their ranks after

forcing them to kill their family members and neighbors.

Once conscripted, many children are subject to brutal induction ceremonies. The impact of the regular use of physical and emotional abuse involving degradation and humiliation of younger recruits to "indoctrinate" discipline, and to induce fear of superiors usually results in low self-esteem, guilt feelings and violent solutions to problems.

In addition, children are treated like their adult counterparts. This can have severe physical effects. Poor and inadequate food and medical care have more serious implications for children, whose bodies are still growing and may be weakened by the exertions of military life. Children who cannot "keep up" are routinely killed by their leaders so that they cannot reveal any secrets.

Child soldiers are sometimes drugged so that they will fight even more fiercely. They may be used as human shields, to protect the more valuable, trained adult soldiers.

Some children may appear to become combatants of their own accord. These are children—children without the capacity to judge what is in their own best interest. Children who are subject to subtle manipulations by family and community members may succumb to pressures that lead them to participate in hostilities.

Some children become so enraged by the violence against their families and communities they become combatants to seek revenge. These "volunteers" are children who have witnessed extremes of physical violence, including death squad killings, disappearances, torture, destruction of home or property and massacres. Young children seldom appreciate the dangers which they face. Alone, orphaned, frightened, bored, and frustrated, they will often finally choose to fight.

When a conflict has ended, child soldiers often do not receive any special treatment for their reintegration into civil society. Child soldiers have different needs than adult soldiers and require special services, such as education, training, and social and psychological rehabilitation.

Although child soldiers are subjected to unspeakable horrors, the international community has been slow in outlawing the use of children under 18 in armed conflicts. Today, international law regarding child soldiers is governed primarily by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention states that children under 15 cannot be recruited, conscripted, or made to participate in armed conflict. Every country in the United Nations, except the United States and Somalia has ratified the Convention.

Currently, a number of governments are working in Geneva to establish an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that would raise the minimum age for recruitment and participation in conflict in 18. The

working group has met over the past five years, but so far has been unable to reach consensus as to the wording and terms of the protocol. This delay is in part due to the United States, which does not want to give up its practice of recruiting youths under 18 for military service.

Although in the United States conscription is limited to those 18 and over, the United States military has a long standing practice of recruiting youths under the age of 18 and allowing them to be designated to fill combat positions. According to the U.S. Defense Department, children under the age of 18 make up less than one-half of one percent of active U.S. troops, about 7,000 individuals. I urge the Defense Department to examine its policy of recruiting children under the age of 18. Further, I urge the Defense Department to reassign those recruits under 18 to non-combat positions and adopt a clear policy barring those under 18 from participating in armed conflict. These steps would bring the United States closer to the emerging international consensus regarding the minimum age for military service.

Further, to move forward, the United States government must drop its objection to an international agreement establishing 18 as the minimum age for recruitment or participation in armed conflict. Since the United States is not even a party to the parent treaty, our opposition is inappropriate. The United States should not object to other countries moving forward in protecting their children even if we choose not to follow suit.

Mr. President, I speak today for these children who have grown up surrounded by violence and can only see this as a permanent way of life; for the children who are the victims of unfathomable terror and violence; and, for the children who are forced to perpetrate equal atrocities upon others.

I speak for the children who have no other voice to speak for them, and no voice to speak for themselves. I submit this resolution so that the United States Congress can speak for these children.

I ask the United States Senate, as we look to the new millennium, to begin the process whereby we eliminate the use of children as soldiers. I ask the Senate to give voice to these children and to future generations of children through passage of this concurrent resolution.

The resolution simply provides that (1) the Congress joins the international community in condemning the use of children as soldiers; and (2) it is the sense of the Congress that (A) the United States should not oppose current efforts to negotiate an optional international agreement to raise the international minimum age for military service to the age of 18; (B) The Secretary of State should address positively and expediently this issue in the next session of the United Nations working group relating to child sol-

diers before this process is abandoned by the international community; and (C) the President and the Congress should work together to enact a law that establishes a fund for the rehabilitation and reintegration into society of child soldiers.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 73—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE CONGRESS REGARDING FREEDOM DAY

Mr. LIEBERMAN submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. CON. RES. 73

Whereas on November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall was torn down by those whom it had imprisoned;

Whereas the fall of the Berlin Wall has become the preeminent symbol of the end of the Cold War;

Whereas the Cold War, at its essence, was a struggle for human freedom;

Whereas the end of the Cold War was brought about in large measure by the dedication, sacrifice, and discipline of Americans and many other peoples around the world united in their opposition to Soviet Communism;

Whereas freedom's victory on the Cold War against Soviet Communism is the crowning achievement of the free world's long 20th century struggle against totalitarianism; and

Whereas it is highly appropriate to remind Americans, particularly those in their formal educational years, that America paid the price and bore the burden to ensure the survival of liberty on this planet: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress that—

(1) a Freedom Day should be celebrated each year in the United States; and

(2) the United States should join with other nations, specifically including those which liberated themselves to help end the Cold War, to establish a global holiday called Freedom Day.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, we have just marked the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, one of the most important milestones of our era. In honor of this event, I am submitting a resolution urging that a "Freedom Day" be celebrated each year in the United States. It also calls on the United States to work with other nations to establish a global holiday called "Freedom Day." The House already passed an identical resolution, introduced by my friend House Policy Chairman CHRISTOPHER COX, by a vote of 417-0, and it is my hope that we can pass it in the Senate before adjournment.

A decade later, it is sometimes easy to forget the profound significance of November 9, 1989, the day that Berlin Wall came down. It was the symbolic end of four decades of a Cold War that had dominated our foreign and defense policies and threatened international stability. The Cold War's end was a resounding success for the United States and the international community, that set off a worldwide movement toward

greater democratization and the embrace of free markets.

In the United States, credit for this success can be generously distributed to generations of American leaders, both Democrats and Republicans, who never wavered in their courageous determination to contain the Soviet Union and resist totalitarianism. The end of the Cold War was truly a bipartisan effort and a national achievement, and is a model of cooperation that we should not forget as we seek to address the international concerns we face now and in the future.

The fall of the wall was a transcendent moment in the struggle against totalitarianism and for democracy, a smashing victory for the human spirit and the cause of human rights. It is only fitting that we choose the anniversary of this epochal triumph to honor and celebrate freedom's march of progress across the planet.

This effort to establish a "Freedom Day," in recognition of the end of the Cold War, was inspired by my good friend Ben Wattenberg, Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a long time champion of freedom and democracy. His recent column entitled "moving Forward With Freedom Day" is particularly noteworthy.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the complete text of Mr. Wattenberg's column be inserted in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MOVING FORWARD WITH FREEDOM DAY

Ten years ago, on Nov. 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall was battered down by the people it had imprisoned. The event is regarded as the moment the Cold War ended. For Americans without sentiment memories of World War II, the end of the Cold War has been the most momentous historical event of their lifetimes, and so it will likely remain.

Long yearned for, the end of the Cold War has more than lived up to expectations: Democracy is on the march globally, defense budgets are proportionately down, market economies are beginning to flourish most everywhere, everyday people are benefiting each and every day.

The end of the Cold War actually was a process, not an event. By early 1989, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev had pulled his troops from Afghanistan, whipped. Poles elected a noncommunist government; the Soviets did nothing. Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and later Bulgaria installed non-communist governments. It was called "the velvet revolution," with only Romania the exception; Nicolae Ceausescu and his empress were executed.

For almost two years, the U.S.S.R. remained a one-party communist state, gradually eroding. Hard-liners attempted to resist the slow motion dismemberment. On Aug. 19, 1991, Boris Yeltsin stood on a tank to resist a hard-line coup. The hammer-and-sickle came down; the Russian tricolor went up. Other Soviet republics declared independence, including the big guy on the block, Ukraine.

U.S. diplomats did not "gloat" about it. The sovereign state of Russia would be unstable enough without the United States rubbing it in.

On Dec. 4, 1991, I proposed in a column that a new national holiday be established to